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ABSTRACT

This report examines the impact of three restructuring strategies--interdisciplinary teaming, school-within-a-school organization, and flexible scheduling---on professional interactions between teachers. The ways in which collegiality and collaboration have been addressed in the education literature are discussed, and how collaboration is conceptualized in this study is described. The balance of the report offers an empirical examination of the relationships between collaboration and the restructuring practices using evidence from a case study of an urban high school undergoing major restructuring. Case study data consist of three waves of a teacher survey (n=86, n=76, and n=94), 2 focused interviews with 24 faculty and staff members, and participant observation throughout the school year. In general, the school's reform effort was successful in increasing teachers' general sense of collegiality and their levels of collaboration. Some of the barriers and limitations identified do raise warning flags, but they did not negate the largely positive trends in the evidence presented. (Contains 3 tables, 4 figures, and 26 references.) (SLD)

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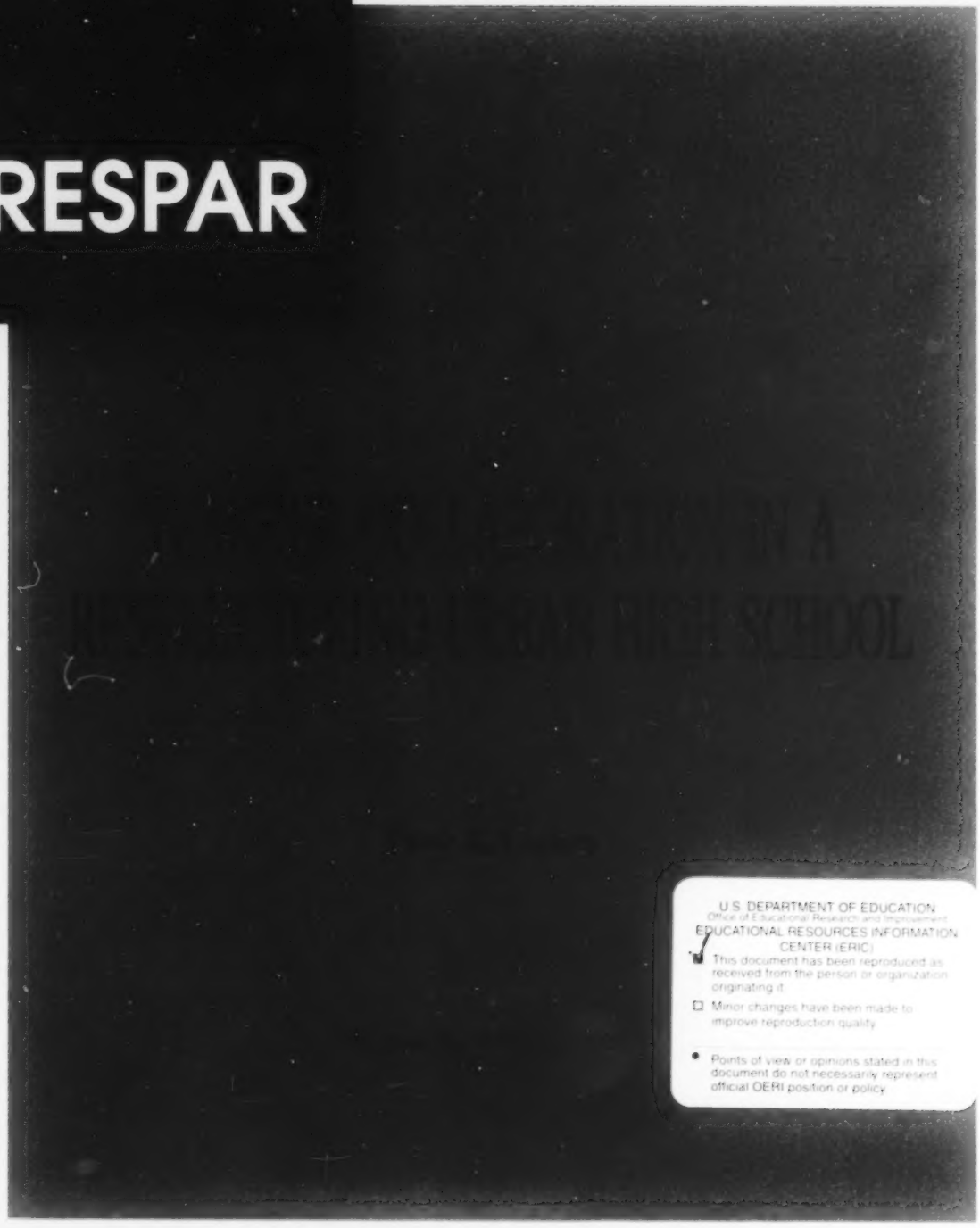

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TEACHER COLLABORATION IN A RESTRUCTURING URBAN HIGH SCHOOL

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Report No. 37

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The Center

Every child has the capacity to succeed in school and in life. Yet far too many children, especially those from poor and minority families, are placed at risk by school practices that are based on a sorting paradigm in which some students receive high-expectations instruction while the rest are relegated to lower quality education and lower quality futures. The sorting perspective must be replaced by a "talent development" model that asserts that all children are capable of succeeding in a rich and demanding curriculum with appropriate assistance and support.

The mission of the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk (CRESPAR) is to conduct the research, development, evaluation, and dissemination needed to transform schooling for students placed at risk. The work of the Center is guided by three central themes — ensuring the success of all students at key development points, building on students' personal and cultural assets, and scaling up effective programs — and conducted through seven research and development programs and a program of institutional activities.

CRESPAR is organized as a partnership of Johns Hopkins University and Howard University, in collaboration with researchers at the University of California at Santa Barbara, University of California at Los Angeles, University of Chicago, Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, University of Memphis, Haskell Indian Nations University, and University of Houston-Clear Lake.

CRESPAR is supported by the National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students (At-Risk Institute), one of five institutes created by the Educational Research, Development, Dissemination and Improvement Act of 1994 and located within the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) at the U.S. Department of Education. The At-Risk Institute supports a range of research and development activities designed to improve the education of students at risk of educational failure because of limited English proficiency, poverty, race, geographic location, or economic disadvantage.

Abstract

The emphasis on collaboration in schools is part of a broader movement to institute team-based, cooperative work structures in many organizations throughout the private and public sectors. Very little is known, however, about how changing the organizational structure of schools actually affects the frequency, form, and content of communication and collaboration among teachers, especially in restructuring high schools.

This report examines the impact of three restructuring strategies — interdisciplinary teaming, school-within-a-school organization, and flexible scheduling — on professional interactions between teachers. The author begins with a discussion of the ways in which collegiality and collaboration have been addressed in the education literature to date and a description of how collaboration is conceptualized in this study. The balance of the report offers an empirical examination of the relationships between collaboration and the restructuring practices using evidence from a case study of an urban high school undergoing major restructuring.

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Breaking down the isolated nature of teachers' work and increasing opportunities for substantive collaboration are central features of current efforts to restructure schools (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Murphy, 1990). This emphasis on collaboration in schools is part of a broader movement to institute team-based, cooperative work structures in many organizations throughout the private and public sectors. Collegiality and collaboration are critical to ongoing innovation and improved effectiveness. Very little is known, however, about how changing the organizational structure of schools actually affects the frequency, form, and content of communication and collaboration among teachers, especially in restructuring high schools.

This report examines the impact of three restructuring strategies — interdisciplinary teaming, school-within-a-school organization, and flexible scheduling — on professional interactions between teachers. Following a brief discussion of the ways in which collegiality and collaboration have been addressed in the education literature to date and a description of how collaboration is conceptualized in this study, the balance of the report explores the relationship between collaboration and the restructuring practices. The author outlines guiding hypotheses that describe the likely relationship between each practice and teacher collaboration, and then examines the relationships empirically with evidence from a case study of an urban high school undergoing major restructuring that involves each of the three practices.

Background

In *Schoolteacher*, Lortie (1975) drew salient connections between the segmented, egg-crate structure of schooling, isolating work conditions, and norms of individualism, conservatism, and presentism among teachers. Since then, researchers and reformers have promoted collegiality and collaboration as ways of overcoming deeply rooted norms of privacy among teachers that are viewed as barriers to ongoing school improvement. There is now widespread agreement in the education reform literature about the need for strong professional communities and support for teacher collaboration in schools (Louis & Kruse, 1995; Lieberman, in Little & McLaughlin, 1993). In a recent report, Newmann and Wehlage (1995) cite professional community, a team oriented approach, and small school size that enable closer, more frequent professional interactions as important conditions for successful school restructuring. Other influential voices in education reform, such as Sizer (1984, 1992) and Goodlad (1984, 1990), also call for increased collegiality and collaboration among teachers

in schools and in teacher training programs. According to Little and McLaughlin (1993:1), the past decade has seen "a virtual campaign to break the bounds of privacy in teaching."

Studies on teacher-teacher relations reveal, however, that sustained, meaningful interaction among teachers is an extremely rare achievement in schools. Little's (1987:505) research on interactions among teachers in schools led her to conclude that much "that passes for collegiality does not add up to much." She also found that simply increasing the frequency of contact among teachers does not necessarily lead to positive change; although close working groups of teachers can promote change, they may also develop norms of interaction that reinforce a conservative status quo. This point is underscored in Hargreaves' (1994) study of elementary school teachers in which he finds instances of teacher collaboration that is "contrived," driven by administrative mandate rather than teacher initiative. In these cases, authentic collaboration is undermined by administrative efforts to require and rigidly schedule teacher meeting times, and by teachers resisting interference of other teachers and administrators in their teaching practice.

In addition to being rare, teacher collaboration is a very complex phenomenon. There are many ways in which teachers may interact in a school, many sites where those interactions may take place, and many different topics about which teachers may interact. What constitutes collaboration, and, in particular, what constitutes *desirable* collaboration is not a straightforward question. Moreover, collaboration may be distinguished from the broader notion of collegiality, though these terms are often used interchangeably in the literature. Collegiality denotes the extent to which teachers perceive their colleagues to be generally helpful, supportive, and willing to discuss and work together on substantive matters. Collaboration is an aspect of this more general concept of collegiality and implies actually working together on a joint project or toward a common goal.

Little (1990) addresses this complexity in her typology of teacher-teacher interaction in schools. Her research identifies four types of collegial relations among teachers along a continuum of interdependence. These types, described below, provide the basis for survey questions used in the case study examined later in this article:

- *Storytelling and scanning* for ideas enables teachers to gain practical information through occasional, sporadic, and relatively informal exchanges. While there may be great value to this kind of "teacher talk," it is unlikely to change patterns of independent, isolated practice.

- *Aid and assistance*, whether informal or systematic through teacher induction or mentor programs, requires slightly more mutual obligation and public scrutiny of one's work. These interactions tend to be one-on-one, piecemeal, and crisis-oriented.

- *Routine sharing* of materials, methods, and ideas, through meetings, assemblies, regular workshops, etc., makes teaching practice more visible and informed by an expanded pool of ideas and methods.

- *Joint work* involves the greatest amount of interdependence of the four types. Shared responsibility for the actual work of teaching requires teachers not only to share information, but organize their tasks, time, and resources cooperatively. The success of joint activities often requires open levels of conflict that can be tense and uncomfortable. Such difficulties make successful, meaningful joint work in schools a rare occurrence.

For Little, collegiality as *collaboration* implies the fourth type — actual joint work.

Further complexity is explored in recent literature that questions whether teacher collegiality and collaboration are unequivocally good experiences for teachers and schools. As Little and McLaughlin (1993:5) point out, the idea that "collegiality constitutes a public good, and more of it is better" is too simplistic to be a useful guide for policymakers or practitioners. Characterizing individualism as "bad" and collaboration as "good" fails to capture the complex, situated patterns of interaction that make up the daily lives of teachers in schools. Some aspects of collaboration among teachers may stifle rather than stimulate professional growth, just as some aspects of autonomy and individuality may be functional for teachers. In a nuanced analysis of ethnographic data, Hargreaves (1993) demonstrates how teachers' caring for students, individual creativity, and healthy need for reflective and restorative solitude may conflict with expectations to spend more time collaborating and planning with other adults.

Finally, as Little and McLaughlin (1993) stress, collegiality and collaboration are highly contextualized phenomena. Secondary schools, in particular, are complex organizations where teachers are often more involved with a subgroup in the school, such as a subject-area department or a school-within-a-school program, than with teachers in other parts of the school. This "balkanized" nature of secondary schools means that "collaboration can connect, but that it can just as easily divide" (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 213). Teachers may collaborate closely with a small number of colleagues, but have very little to do with faculty working in other departments or areas of the school. The frequency and quality of collegial relations and collaboration have been shown to vary substantially across subject-area departments within the same schools (McLaughlin, in Little & McLaughlin, 1993). Membership on interdisciplinary teams also may conflict with efforts to build a meaningful, school-wide professional community, as shown by Kruse and Louis' (1995) research on restructuring middle schools.

Conceptualization of Teacher Collaboration and Structural Reform Practices

Teacher Collaboration

This study attempts to deal with the high level of complexity that is inherent in concepts of teacher collegiality and collaboration by combining quantitative and qualitative methods to examine the relationships between structural reforms and teacher-teacher interactions.

The analyses in this report examine a broad sense of collegiality among teachers in schools, as well as more concrete acts of joint work, or collaboration. Survey data from the case study operationalize teacher-teacher interactions in terms of teachers' general perceptions of their colleagues and school environment. Items include the extent to which teachers feel they can count on their colleagues to help out, whether general cooperative effort and cordiality exist among the school staff, and the extent of agreement among faculty about the school's overall mission. These data also address teacher collaboration in items that ask teachers to characterize how they interact with other teachers during a typical week. Response categories for this set of items are patterned after Little's (1990) four types of teacher interactions — informal conversations, one-on-one assistance, routine sharing of materials, methods and ideas, and actual joint work. Baseline and follow-up data provide a picture of how teachers' experiences have changed as the reforms have been implemented in the school.

Observation and interview data from the case study enable more in-depth examination of teacher collaboration, that is, what teachers actually do, how they spend their days, with whom they interact and the content of those interactions. These data will determine the extent to which the reform practices enhance, inhibit, or have no effect at all on the frequency with which teachers actually engage in joint work, and the content of teacher interactions.

Structural Reforms

This study focuses on three specific reform practices drawn from a list of practices identified by the Wisconsin Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Lee & Smith, 1995). The practices are school-within-a-school organization, interdisciplinary teaming, and flexible scheduling. They were chosen for this study because all three have significant implications for the organization of teachers' work, and because they are all are primary components of the restructuring effort at Harbor High School, the subject of the case study described below. Descriptions of each of these three practices are provided in Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptions of Three Restructuring Practices:
School-Within-a-School Organization, Interdisciplinary Teaming,
and Flexible Scheduling

School-Within-a-School Organization	In response to the potentially alienating effects of large school size, school-within-a-school strategies attempt to create smaller, focused, more personalized educational environments better equipped to meet the needs of individual students. Such programs encompass a broad spectrum of educational goals and approaches, ranging from programs for gifted and talented youth to programs designed to aid pregnant teens and students at-risk of dropping out of high school. In addition to generic pods or clusters within a school, two other main categories of school-within-a-school approaches are magnet schools (Blank, 1983; Henig, 1994) and Career Academies (Stern et al., 1992; Burnett, 1992).
Interdisciplinary Teaming	An interdisciplinary team is typically defined as a group of two or more subject-area teachers who share the same students and who share responsibility for the curriculum, instruction, evaluation, and often the control and discipline of those students (Arhar, 1992; Alexander & George, 1981). Though their structure varies widely, the most common form is a four-teacher team made up of a math, an English, a science, and a social studies teacher who share a group of 100-125 students (Mac Iver & Epstein, 1991). Ideally, teacher teams are provided with common planning time during the school day to work together as a team.
Flexible Scheduling	Flexible time for classes typically means that a group of teachers (often an interdisciplinary team) has control over all or at least part of the daily schedule and may change it, from week to week or even daily, to meet the particular and changing needs of their students. Other reforms that promote greater flexibility in teachers' work include reorganizing the school day into fewer, longer periods (e.g., four 90-minute periods), and lengthening the school day and even the school year (National Education Commission on Time and Learning, 1994; See also Michaels, 1988; Wood, 1981; Williamson, 1993).

Case Study of Harbor High School

Data

Data for this study consists of longitudinal survey data and qualitative interviews and observations conducted in a large, inner-city high school that is currently undergoing major reform.

Located in an industrial part of a large eastern city, Harbor High School (a fictitious name) has felt the effects of increased unemployment and consequent poverty that have plagued many working class, urban neighborhoods over the past two decades. Its plummeting achievement, dropout rates rising to over 50%, and increasing truancy and violence earned this school a reputation for being disorderly and ineffective. Initial site visits prior to the implementation of the reform program confirmed this perception: "The school learning environment was in chaos. Small groups of unruly students were constantly roaming the halls and stairways, and repeated faculty efforts to bring order to the building were unsuccessful. Teachers unable to maintain peace in the halls retreated to their classrooms where they tried to do their best with the few students in their own rooms. They kept the doors of their rooms closed, and many papered over their door windows to shut out the outside confusion" (McPartland, Legters, et. al., 1996).

Threatened with reconstitution by the state if it did not produce significant changes to improve its abysmal achievement, dropout, and attendance records, Harbor High School underwent an improvement planning process in 1994-95 and began implementing several reforms in fall of 1995. These reforms include breaking up the school into five, smaller, schools-within-a-school (one Ninth Grade Academy and four upper-level Career Academies), moving to a flexible block schedule of four 90-minute periods per day, and organizing teachers in the Ninth Grade Academy into interdisciplinary teams.

Case study data consists of: 1) three waves of a teacher survey administered in May 1995 (N=86), October 1995 (N=76) and May 1996 (N=94); 2) focused interviews with 24 faculty and staff members conducted in May 1996; and, 3) participant observation throughout the 1995-96 school year. These data allow comparison of teachers' responses prior to instituting the reforms with teachers' responses at the beginning and end of the first year of implementation. The 24 focused interviews included 19 ninth grade teachers, the two ninth grade academy administrators, the vice principal who served as the ninth grade academy principal during the first term (but who was pulled away to write the reports required by the state monitoring officials), the school's media specialist (a key figure in the daily operation of the school), and the school principal. I concentrated on the ninth grade teachers primarily because they were the only teachers to be organized into interdisciplinary teams, making the

ninth grade academy the only part of the school where the effects of this practice could be studied. For a more exhaustive analysis of the Harbor High case study and a supplemental analysis of national survey data, see Legters (1996).

Guiding Hypotheses

The relationship between the three restructuring practices examined here — interdisciplinary teaming, school-within-a-school programs, and flexible scheduling — and teachers' work experiences at the high school level has received scant attention in the research literature. For this reason, hypotheses that guide this study are largely based on an ideal vision of how the reform practices should work in high schools, tempered by what little we know about how they work in other educational settings and about the complexities of teacher collegiality and collaboration described above.

Interdisciplinary teaming and teacher collaboration

Interdisciplinary teaming is the education equivalent to efforts in industry and government to replace the isolated, alienated worker with responsive, problem-solving teams. As such, interdisciplinary teams are specifically designed to promote greater and deeper levels of collegiality and collaboration among teachers. Ideally, teacher teams work together to coordinate instruction across subjects, organize activities, and collectively address problems for the students they share in common.

There are likely to be limits, however, to the positive effects that interdisciplinary teaming may have on collegiality and collaboration among teachers. Teachers may collaborate more on administrative tasks (e.g., discipline or scheduling and grouping techniques) than on instruction, as was found in Cohen's (1981) review of early teaming experiments in elementary schools. Moreover, the extent to which interdisciplinary teaming affects collegiality and collaboration among teachers is likely to vary depending on several factors, including the team's composition and leadership, the strength of the teachers' connection to their subject-area identities and departments as opposed to their team, and the level of decision-making power and administrative support the team enjoys.

School-within-a-school programs and teacher collaboration

By virtue of the smaller size that provides opportunities for more frequent interactions among staff and the common ground created by the focused nature of the program, school-within-a-school organization has the potential to increase collegiality and collaboration among

faculty. Indeed, reorganizing into smaller, self-contained learning communities or academies is fast becoming a signature practice in restructuring efforts aimed at large comprehensive high schools not only to combat student alienation, but as a remedy for teacher isolation as well.

Given the strong norms of privacy and subject-department orientation of most secondary teachers, however, even teachers in a small learning community may plan and teach in isolation from each other, with only an occasional meeting to bring them together. Or, teachers in a school-within-a-school program may work well together, but have very little contact with teachers in the rest of the school, leaving questionable the extent to which teachers would characterize their whole-school community as collegial and collaborative. Indeed, the presence of one or more schools-within-a-school may lead to resentment if teachers perceive inequities in resource distribution among the smaller units.

Flexible time for classes and teacher collaboration

Interdisciplinary teaming and school-within-a-school arrangements provide opportunity structures for increased teacher collegiality and collaboration. In contrast, flexible time for classes is a practice that almost *presupposes* a high level of cooperation among school staff. Changing the daily schedule and grouping and regrouping students in flexible ways requires that teachers communicate and work together. For example, if a math teacher saw the need to provide extra help to a small group of students at-risk of failing a state-required graduation exam, she would have to coordinate with other teachers to adjust the schedule for those students and the others who did not need the extra help.

Of the three practices, flexible time is the only one that virtually necessitates substantial levels of collegiality and collaboration among teachers. However, according to a national survey of high school principals, it is the practice that is implemented the least (Legters, 1996). Moreover, using time flexibly during the school day requires such a tremendous amount of trust, communication, and coordination that it may be "on the books" as an instituted reform, but it is used very little, if at all, in actual practice.

Findings

As with all school-wide reform efforts, it is extremely difficult to isolate the effects of specific practices like school-within-a-school organization, interdisciplinary teaming, and flexible time for classes from the other initiatives that were instituted at Harbor High School during the 1995-96 school year. It is also difficult to attribute changes in teachers' reports about their work experiences directly to the institution of particular structural changes when

these changes are taking place in a complex context permeated by a strong and palpable "spirit" of reform, as was the case at Harbor High.

In spite of these difficulties, it is possible to draw some inferences about the impact of the practices considered here on teachers' work lives. As far as teachers' work is concerned, the elimination of subject area departments and the reorganization of the school into five distinct schools-within-a-school are probably the most prominent of all the reforms instituted at Harbor, rivaled only by the organization of the school day into four, 90-minute periods. Arguably, many of the changes in teachers' work experiences are related to this dramatic reorganization. Moreover, interdisciplinary teaming was instituted only in the academy that houses the ninth grade students, that is, the Ninth Grade Success Academy. Comparing responses of teachers in the Success Academy with those in the other parts of the school may reveal some differences between teachers simply working in a school-within-a-school and teachers working both in a school-within-a-school and on an interdisciplinary team. It is not possible with the survey data to examine the effects of flexible time for classes, in part because, by all accounts, the occasions teachers used time flexibly were extremely rare. This reform will be addressed with the interview and observation data in the following section.

In this section, I first examine several survey items that tap teachers' general sense of collegiality and collaboration, using the whole school sample and comparing the responses of Ninth Grade Success Academy teachers with upper grade teachers where appropriate. I then turn to items based on Little's (1990) framework to examine changes in the ways in which teachers interact with one another during a typical week.

Collegiality and Collaboration at Harbor High — General Responses

Table 2 presents the percentages of teachers who agree or strongly agree with survey items that capture a general sense of collegiality and collaboration among faculty at Harbor High School. In five of the six items, the proportion of the whole school faculty who agree with these statements increased from the collection of baseline data in May 1995 to the end of the first year of implementation in May 1996. For some items, this increase is quite dramatic. For example, while very few (13%) of teachers at Harbor felt that their school seemed "like a big family" in May 1995, a full 50% responded positively in October 1995, a figure which increased to over two-thirds by the end of the 1995-96 school year. In general, it appears that the restructuring reforms are having a positive effect on teachers' assessments of the collegial nature of their school environment.

Table 2
Teachers who Agree or Strongly Agree with Teacher Collegiality/Collaboration Items by Whole School, Ninth Grade, and Upper Grades

			May 1995	Oct. 1995	May 1996
1)	I make a conscious effort to coordinate the content of my courses with other teachers.	Whole School	55%	72%	67%
		Ninth Grade	54%	71%	71%
		Upper Grades	52%	71%	66%
2)	I am familiar with the content and specific goals of the courses taught by other teachers in my department.	Whole School	65%	59%	61%
		Ninth Grade	67%	72%	59%
		Upper Grades	64%	56%	59%
3)	You can count on most staff members to help out.	Whole School	60%	84%	85%
		Ninth Grade	68%	82%	89%
		Upper Grades	64%	89%	93%
4)	There is a great deal of cooperative effort among staff members.	Whole School	58%	87%	90%
		Ninth Grade	70%	73%	77%
		Upper Grades	57%	93%	93%
5)	This school seems like a big family; everyone is so close and cordial.	Whole School	13%	50%	67%
		Ninth Grade	13%	46%	69%
		Upper Grades	14%	54%	70%
6)	Most of my colleagues share my beliefs about the central mission of the school.	Whole School	65%	90%	96%
		Ninth Grade	67%	91%	96%
		Upper Grades	70%	91%	98%

One area where there is no improvement in teachers' experiences is the extent to which they are familiar with the content and goals of the courses taught by other teachers in their same subject-area department. The proportion of the whole school faculty who express such familiarity remains essentially flat, dropping from 65% to 59% from May to October, and then increasing only slightly to 61% by the end of the year. This is not surprising given that subject-area departments were completely eliminated in the reorganization. Indeed, it is encouraging that there is not more decline in teachers' familiarity with courses taught by their subject-area colleagues.

The decline in teachers' familiarity with the content and goals of other courses taught in their subject area is more pronounced for teachers in the ninth grade Success Academy, dropping from 72% in fall of 1995 to 59% in spring of 1996. This drop-off may be due to the organization of ninth grade teachers into interdisciplinary teams that leaves them less time and opportunity to seek out and interact with their subject-area colleagues. Additional support for

an independent effect of teaming is found in item 1, which shows an upward trend over the first year of implementation in the number of ninth grade teachers who feel they make a conscious effort to coordinate the content of their courses with other teachers. Responses of teachers in the upper grade academies decline somewhat on this item. This suggests that ninth grade teachers working on interdisciplinary teams are more inclined to coordinate with their team members (or at least know that is a desirable goal), while teachers in the more traditionally organized upper grade academies are continuing a habit of privatized practice. The differences on this item are small, however, and any strong conclusions along these lines will have to await further data collection.

Alternative explanations for the ninth grade vs. upper grade differences include the fact that the bulk of the teachers new to Harbor in the fall of 1995 were concentrated in the ninth grade academy. Without a history of relationships with subject-area colleagues to fall back on, these teachers likely had difficulty making contact with subject-area colleagues in the absence of formal departments. Another possibility is related to the fairly dramatic separation of the ninth grade academy from the rest of the school that developed over the course of the 1995-96 school year. This division, which had not only physical, but psychic and philosophical dimensions, also may help explain the substantial decrease in the proportion of ninth grade teachers who feel that they could "count on most staff members to help out" (item 3 in Table 2). These themes are explored further in the analysis of interview and observation data below. Before turning to the interview data, however, I analyze another set of survey items which examine different ways in which teachers actually interact with each other.

Changes in Frequency of Different Types of Teacher-Teacher Interactions

Figures 1 through 4 graph changes in the distribution of teacher responses to a question that asked them to report how often in a typical week they interact with other teachers in four categories: informal conversations; one-on-one assistance; routine sharing of materials, methods and ideas; and actual joint work. In each category, the number of teachers responding "never" or "rarely" declined substantially from Spring 1995 to Spring 1996. The proportion of teachers who "never" or "rarely" held informal conversations with their colleagues dropped from nearly a quarter in May 1995 to only 1% by May 1996, with nearly all of this drop occurring from Fall to Spring of the implementation year. The proportion of teachers who "never" or "rarely" participated in one-on-one assistance or routine sharing also dropped below 10% by Spring 1996. Figure 4 shows that over half (55%) of teacher respondents at Harbor "never" or "rarely" engaged in joint work with their colleagues prior to restructuring. This proportion decreased to less than one-third by the end of the first year of reform.

Figure 1
Distribution of Teachers Engaging in Informal Conversations During a Typical School Week

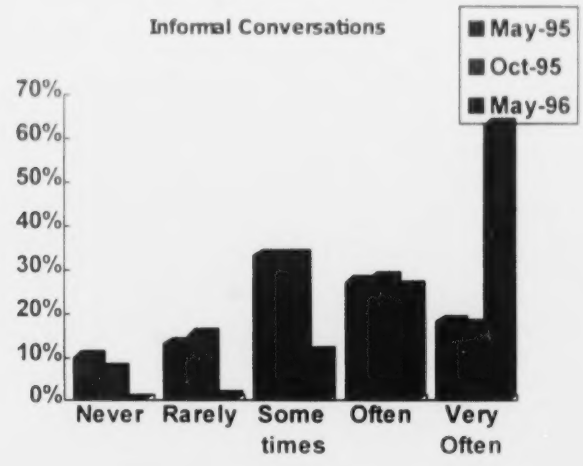


Figure 2
Distribution of Teachers Engaging in One-on-One Assistance During a Typical School Week

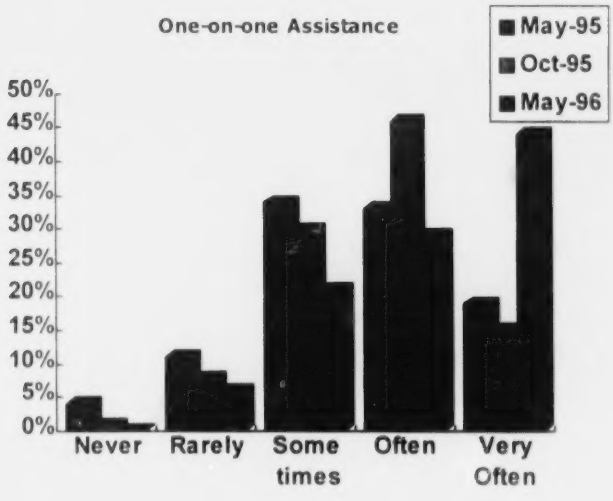


Figure 3

Frequency Distribution of Teachers Engaging in Routine Sharing During a Typical School Week

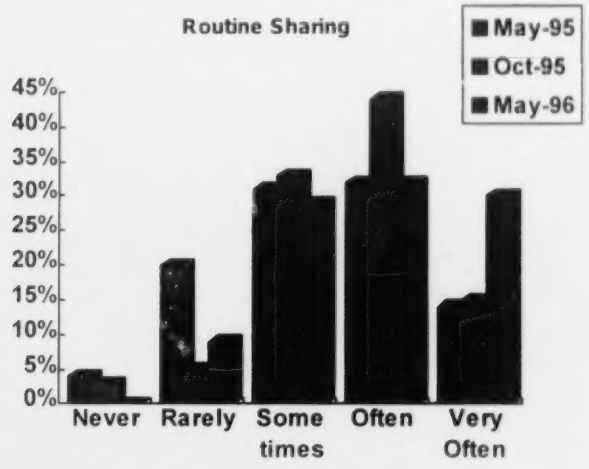
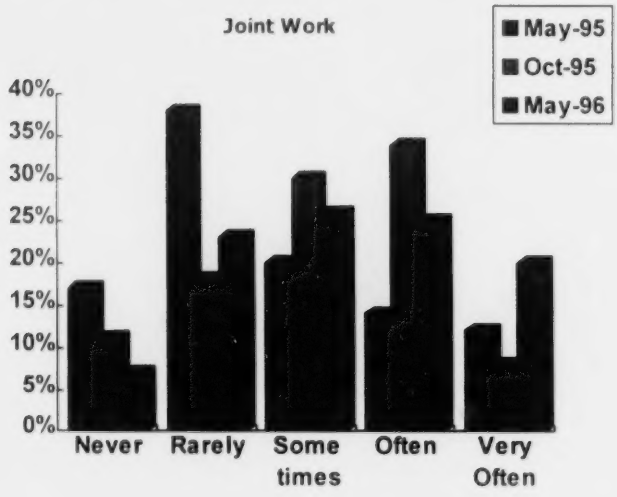


Figure 4

Frequency Distribution of Teachers Engaging in Joint Work During a Typical School Week



An upward trend in the frequency of interactions among teachers at Harbor also is dramatically evident in the "very often" category. From Fall 1995 to Spring 1996, the proportion of teachers who reported engaging in informal conversations with one another "very often" increased nearly four-fold, from 17% to 63%. For one-on-one assistance, nearly three times as many teachers selected the "very often" category in the spring (44%) as in the fall (15%). Routine sharing increased in this category from 15% to 30%, and joint work increased from 8% to 20%.

Combining the "often" and "very often" categories, however, reveals differences among the four types of collegiality. Table 3 shows the percentage of teachers reporting frequent levels of teacher interaction ("often" and "very often") for each of the different types of collegiality. This analysis shows that much of the positive change in teachers' participation in informal conversations occurred from fall to spring during the first year of reform. One-on-one assistance increased gradually over all three survey waves. In contrast, much of the overall change in teachers' reports of involvement in routine sharing and joint work appears to have taken place from Spring 1995 to Fall 1995, with little change occurring from Fall to Spring of the actual implementation year. Teachers who reported that they engage in routine sharing or joint work with high levels of frequency increased only three percentage points from fall to spring, from 59% to 62% for routine sharing, and from 42% to 45% for joint work.

Table 3
Teachers Responding "Often" or "Very Often" to the Question: "During a typical week in this school, how often do you interact with other teachers in the following way?"

	% Teachers		
	May 1995	Oct. 1995	May 1996
1) Informal Conversations	45%	45%	89%
2) One-on-one Assistance	52%	61%	73%
3) Routine Sharing of Materials, Methods, Ideas	46%	59%	62%
4) Joint Work	26%	42%	45%

These results suggest that the tremendous amount of cooperative effort it took on the part of the school staff to get the "new" Harbor High up and running, and the initial weeks of working together in the academies and on teams raised the level of collaboration among teachers substantially compared with the previous year. It appears, however, that it was difficult to continue to increase the level of collaborative work throughout the school year. While teachers reported an increase in the types of interaction that require lower levels of interdependence, that is, informal conversations and one-on-one assistance, the frequency of actual collaboration in the form of routine sharing and joint work resisted change once the new organizational structures were in place. Hence the fall to spring increases in the number of teachers who reported that they engaged in routine sharing and joint work "very often" primarily represent an increase of teachers who were already engaging in such interactions with relative frequency.

Case study survey data suggest that Harbor High School's restructuring process is, in general, having a positive effect on teachers' general sense of collegiality and the extent to which teachers are working together. These data also suggest, however, that teachers' awareness of other courses taught in their same subject has suffered somewhat from the elimination of subject-area departments, especially among ninth grade teachers who are not only members of a separate academy, but who also are members of interdisciplinary teams. Moreover, though teachers appear to be interacting more across all four types of collegial relations than they did prior to the new organization, it appears that the school had more difficulty achieving gains in routine collaboration and joint work among teachers once it settled in to its first year of reform.

Case Study Observations and Interviews

In this section, I use interview and observation data to explore in greater detail the kinds of interactions that emerged at Harbor High as teachers negotiated the transition from a traditionally structured school to a restructured school. While observations were made of the whole school faculty, the interview data were collected in the ninth grade academy, mainly because this was the only academy where teachers were organized into interdisciplinary teams. Interviews were conducted in April and May of the 1995-96 school year.

General Observations

The 1994-95 planning year was a difficult one for the Harbor faculty. Struggle over how the school should be reformed was a divisive process that ultimately led to the exit of a

number of faculty members at the close of the school year. Although some of this attrition was voluntary, some was not. My colleagues on the Hopkins research and development team and I were concerned about the possibility of residual uncertainty and resentment among the remaining faculty members that might impede the reform process. What developed over the summer and during the first year of implementation almost completely dispelled our fears. In general, the faculty and staff at Harbor have exhibited high levels of collegiality and cooperation as they have worked together to get the "new" Harbor up and running. A strong spirit of reform, openness to learning, helpful attitudes, a willingness to do extra work, and a sense of common purpose permeated faculty gatherings, offering a stark contrast to previous years and to other troubled high schools we have visited in the same city. While this spirit was most pronounced at the beginning of the year and somewhat worn down by the end of spring term, teachers still expressed optimism about the reform process at year's end.

One of the most dramatic changes at Harbor has been an improvement in the overall school climate. The halls have been largely cleared of the groups of unruly students who roamed aimlessly in previous years. Teachers now teach with their doors open, student attendance is up and, as an observer noted at the beginning of the year, the school finally feels "like a school" again. A similar change appeared to take place in the faculty climate as well. Teachers were much more likely to characterize the teaching faculty as cohesive and enthusiastic in the fall of 1996 than they were the previous year. By all accounts (including the students'), relationships among faculty, staff, and students are much improved.

While the orderliness and the "feel" of the school have improved rapidly, change has been much slower on the instructional front — that is, in what teachers and students actually do during the school day. In many ways, the daily lives of most teachers at Harbor resemble those of teachers in more traditionally organized schools. Teachers arrive at school, sign in at their academy office, greet colleagues on their way to their classrooms, and, once in their classrooms, proceed to teach classes of 30-40 students according to a schedule of four 90-minute periods. They may spend their 90-minute planning period photocopying papers for their classes, calling homes to check on absent students, participating in parent/student conferences, covering a class for another teacher, or struggling to secure supplies and other resources that, as in many urban public schools, are still prone to scarcity at Harbor.

This pattern was typical of teachers organized into interdisciplinary teams. When asked to describe a typical work day, responses by teachers in the ninth grade academy revealed that much of their day is spent alone interacting with students. They described interactions with colleagues as largely informal or social. The press of teaching 90-minute periods, dealing with student problems, and constant interruptions made it very difficult for teachers on interdisciplinary teams to meet on a regular basis, especially in the first half of the year. Meetings

became more regular as the year progressed, partly due to administrative pressure. However, by late spring, teachers still described work days where focused, professional interaction with colleagues about the practice of teaching as an exceptional event.

What was interesting about teachers' interactions in this first year of reform, however, was the amount of work accomplished through informal conversations that occurred "in passing." While many of the teachers' conversations were not professionally relevant, I observed a fairly consistent pattern of teachers and academy administrators grabbing the minutes in between classes and during free periods to "check in" with each other. They touched base about troubled students, discipline processes, grade sheets, and sometimes about lessons they delivered. My observations were echoed by the school's media specialist who perceived development in the content of teachers' interactions with each other:

> "You walk down the halls and now I see classroom doors open, I see teachers talking to each other about...not 'did you see that awful child,' but 'I did this' or 'can we do that?' Teachers still talk about problem children or something they don't like, but it's more [positive]. And I think they're working towards the interdisciplinary thing. They're getting a grasp of what it is."

Thus, while the daily work lives of most teachers at Harbor do not yet look radically different from those of teachers in traditionally organized schools, the content of informal interactions between teachers appears to be gradually shifting onto more substantive terrain.

School-Within-A-School Organization — Cohesions and Divisions

Some of the increase in substantive interactions among teachers may be due to the extra effort that has been required of teachers as they work with administrators to get the school under control and build the academy programs at Harbor. The relatively small faculties in each academy monitor the hallways and bathrooms in their academy area, and watch over students in the cafeteria during lunch. In the ninth grade academy, teacher teams have assumed administrative duties aimed at improving attendance, and serve as the first point of contact for student discipline problems — responsibilities that require significant record keeping, monitoring of students, and calling and meeting with parents. Several teachers work extra hours in an after-school program for students who have been removed from day school primarily for disciplinary purposes. Many of the conversations I observed between teachers during the school day revolved around these duties.

The extra effort within the ninth grade academy to make their school-within-a-school run smoothly increased interactions among teachers and helped build a more cohesive faculty

during the course of the year. Virtually all interview respondents characterized the faculty and staff within the ninth grade academy as far more cohesive than divided. Teachers spoke of the camaraderie and support they felt from their academy colleagues, and a general ability to work together to solve student problems.

Tensions arose over the course of the year that challenged the cohesiveness among faculty within the ninth grade academy, however. Some teachers felt burdened by the additional duties and a little resentful of teachers who appeared to have more time during the day (e.g., team leaders who have two free periods) but who did not monitor students in the cafeteria on a regular basis. One teacher stated outright what many implied in their comments on this topic:

> "I think he (academy principal) puts a lot of demands on us that we shouldn't have to do that aren't in our contract. I also think a lot more would get done if a lot more teachers would do their share.... I think a lot of it is unfair. I think some team leaders should have two periods off ... But some other team leaders, I see them eating lunch for a period and a half. And that's unfair to us...."

In fact, by the end of the year, a number of teachers resisted or refused to spend their lunch periods in the cafeteria with students. One teacher known for good teaching and excellent rapport with students found lunchtime to be a rare moment of solitude during the day:

> "Then it's lunch. I'm supposed to go to the cafeteria. But I'm too tired to do that, and also because the union contract basically says, hey, you deserve a lunch.... I usually eat alone in my room. I think we all need some down time. I know myself, and I need down time. I need time to get away, to think about things for a while."

Variation emerged over the course of the year in the amount of extra work teachers were willing to do. But, as the academy principal noted, the "average level" was much higher than it had ever been.

Although teachers reported cohesion within their academy, the overwhelming majority of the ninth grade academy teachers reported feeling very isolated from the rest of the school faculty:

> "Now that's probably one of the most difficult things. Because we are in separate academies, we have actually become separate faculty. And, some of the staff members here say that they feel that when they go into another academy, that they're not really a part of Harbor. Like you step from your domain into their domain."

This isolation went beyond the simple fact that teachers in different academies have little daily contact with each other because they work in separate wings of the building. It became a source of bad feelings when it was infused with a status difference between teachers teaching in the upper grade career academies and teachers teaching ninth graders. These teachers' comments were typical:

> "The division that I see this year is the division between the Success Academy faculty and the upper level academy faculty....We're never together. We don't care to be together...or, they don't care to be with us. We don't matter to them because we're the ninth grade. It's not a friendly thing. It doesn't feel friendly."
>
> "There's a division between ninth grade success and the other part of the school. They think they're above us, they think they've *arrived*, they think they're more in a position to do whatever. And all you hear is *those* ninth graders."

Working conditions and several events during the school year exacerbated this division between the ninth grade academy and the upper grade academies. The ninth grade academy housed nearly half of the school's entire student population, while the remaining half was distributed among the other four upper-grade academies. Coupled with the relative immaturity of ninth grade students, the larger student population contained in a relatively smaller space made it more difficult for ninth grade academy teachers to maintain order within their academy compared with the other academies.

One of largest sources of irritation and concern expressed by ninth grade teachers revolved around the career academies' unwelcoming attitude toward the ninth grade students. Ninth graders who strayed into other academies during the school day were dealt with very harshly by career academy administrators. They were forcibly dragged back to the ninth grade academy and presented to ninth grade administrators and teachers as serious transgressors of academy lines in a tone that implied that the ninth grade academy could not keep its students under control. At mid-year, a group of students repeating the ninth grade were promoted into the career academies. Career academy teachers and administrators initially balked at this (even though it had been planned from the beginning of the year) and, throughout the second term, continued to attribute drops in their attendance rates to the promoted students.

Unfortunately, the division between the ninth grade and the other academies was reinforced at the beginning of the year by a professional development plan that separated the ninth grade academy faculty from the rest of the academies. The school principal also inadvertently played a role in creating an unequal division between the ninth grade teachers and the career academy teachers when, in an effort to give ninth grade academy teachers a pep talk, she told them she believed in "promoting" people, implying that they wouldn't

necessarily be "stuck" in the ninth grade academy forever. This problem was recognized in the middle of the year and some steps were taken to ameliorate it, but the effectiveness of these efforts was questionable, as reflected in this teacher's skepticism:

> "I understand that there's a mandate now from (the whole-school principal) saying that all the academies must get together now. We *must* like each other. So that's going to happen, that's taken care of, that's been mandated." Laughs.

At year's end, academy divisions continued to play a large role in the experiences of the ninth grade academy faculty. Those interviewed expressed strong feelings of being isolated from and unfairly judged, misunderstood, and unappreciated by career academy faculty.

Interdisciplinary Teaming — Opportunities and Barriers to Collaboration

Though some teachers in the ninth grade academy had taught in middle schools and had experience working on interdisciplinary teams, many were accustomed to working in subject-area departments or were new to teaching altogether. Given the lack of familiarity with the concept of teaming, and the cursory nature of the training on teaming that teachers' received prior to the start of the school year, it is not surprising that, by all accounts, teaming at Harbor remained far from ideal.

Teams became more functional as the year progressed. One administrative change in the middle of the first term that helped bring teams together occurred when the Academy Principal gave team leaders the authority to distribute "stop letters" to students for misbehavior in class. Though procedures varied somewhat by team, students who received stop letters during the school day typically were required to either serve detention after school or, if they failed to appear for detention, could not return to school unless they brought a parent or guardian with them for a conference with the team. This change helped galvanize teams by requiring daily communication between teachers and team leaders around discipline problems. Another event that brought teams closer together and stimulated more frequent interaction was an off-campus workshop where the academy administration initiated a strong focus on improving student attendance. Each team set attendance goals for the spring term and developed strategies for meeting those goals. The focus on attendance was continued throughout the remainder of the year, with weekly attendance rates for each team posted visibly at the entrance to the academy.

Although team members interacted about discipline and attendance, there was very little interaction around content or curriculum coordination. Discussions in team meetings typically revolved around administrative logistics such as grade sheets and attendance reports.

Teachers also discussed students' credits and reported on the results of phone calls to students' homes. Common planning typically consisted of arranging field trips and developing reward and incentive systems for good attendance:

> "And at that time [meeting time] we figure out discipline problems, activities — if we are going to have a picnic for them at the end of the year, or if we are going to give them perfect attendance slips and all that. And we talk about attendance problems. Very rarely do we get to discuss curriculum."

While teachers were aware that curriculum integration was a goal of interdisciplinary teaming and expressed desire to do it, they felt there was little time for it and tended to put it on the list of things to focus on for the following year. As one teacher noted:

> "We really haven't planned [together]...Man, we wanted to do that so much. We haven't had time....This needs to be something that we could...we need to come in early next summer. Because you can't do it...once the kids get here, there's not time. You need time. So, maybe in August, you know, the beginning of August, or whatever. I know people don't want to give up their summer vacation, but something's gotta give."

The sole exception to the absence of curriculum integration on the teams was achieved by a veteran English teacher who developed an integrated unit on "The West." Though she did all of the teaching herself, she asked other teachers on her team how she could incorporate science, math, and social studies into her lesson plans. These conversations did not take place during team meetings, but rather during lunch and between classes. She even called on a Physical Education teacher to help her teach the students to square dance at the end of the unit. She reported in her interview that it would have been much more difficult for her to do something like that in the past, because she didn't have as much contact with teachers outside the English department.

Variation among teams

Observations and interviews revealed substantial variation among the five interdisciplinary teams in the ninth grade academy. Not surprisingly, the English teacher described above taught on what was considered to be the strongest team in the academy. This team was viewed by the academy administration and by other teams as strong not only because a teacher had accomplished an integrated unit, but primarily because this team consistently had the highest attendance rates of all the teams in the academy.

Interestingly, however, the success of this team was not a function of unusually close or frequent professional interaction among team members. In fact, though it was difficult to get a precise estimate of the number of meetings teams actually held, this team appeared to meet, formally or informally, with much less frequency than the other teams. Three factors contributed to this team's success. First, the MESS (math, English, science, social studies) core of this team was made up entirely of veteran teachers who were comfortable with their subject matter and who were more experienced with classroom management than many of the younger teachers in the academy. Second, though this team served some special education students, it was one of two teams in the academy that served students who had smooth promotion trajectories from middle school; the three other teams in the academy were, respectively, targeted for special education students, repeaters and transfers, and a special program for students who had been identified as at-risk in middle school. Finally, this team's success was largely due to the strength of its team leader, a teacher who was held in high regard by both colleagues and students for her commitment and teaching skill. This team collaborated very effectively around attendance, with each teacher pursuing student absences with phone calls while the team leader monitored and spoke with students who cut class.

In contrast, other teams appeared to meet and interact about their students with much greater frequency. One team ate lunch together nearly every day. These teams were less successful in translating their interactions into effective or innovative practices, however. This was partly due to the different character of the students they taught. The team that taught students with smooth promotion trajectories was disrupted in the middle of the year by a change in their team leader, a transition that took several months for the team to overcome. Teachers transferring to other academies at mid-year also had negative effects on team functioning. Leadership, team composition, member continuity, and the character of the students the team teaches emerged as the most important factors in distinguishing teams from one another. Compared with these factors, frequency of formal meetings or informal interactions appeared less important to team effectiveness.

Working without departments

The elimination of subject-area departments was a radical change for many teachers at Harbor. Teachers and administrators reported problems in two areas specifically related to the lack of a department and a department head — 1) knowledge and dissemination of new curriculum and teaching methods specific to the subject-area, and 2) the coordination and distribution of materials, equipment, and other resources.

In the first area, a vice-principal attributed the lack of curriculum focus and integration evident during the first year of reform in part to the absence of departments:

> "Instructionally the teachers themselves have felt the loss of content.... The methodologies of young people change constantly and without someone staying in touch with their finger on the cutting edge, once a month trekking over there for two hours (to district department head meetings).... That's where you got all your information. There was that system and communication that came in from central office."

Several teachers echoed a desire to have a more coordinated curriculum, a few said that they missed the camaraderie of their departments, and most expressed a desire for more frequent interaction with teachers in their same subject area. Efforts to form subject-area groups among ninth grade academy teachers (e.g., writing final exams together) did not leave an impression on the teachers as particularly meaningful interactions. Most teachers, however, did not express a desire to return to a departmentalized organization. They saw potential, if not fully realized, and benefits in the new structure and wanted more interaction with subject-area colleagues *in addition to* working in their academy and with their teams.

While teachers did not want to return to formal departments, nearly all described some frustration and confusion about obtaining resources for their classes. Several described situations where textbooks and other materials for their subject were located in another academy in another part of the building, leaving them dependent on the goodwill and schedule of the teacher who had the key to the room where those materials were kept. There was even some mention of a hoarding mentality in the upper grade academies and a general unwillingness to share with the ninth grade academy.

While older teachers had "collected things over the years," younger teachers seemed to have greater difficulty finding out what was available and obtaining the materials they needed. Two veteran teachers, who were also team leaders, reported becoming "de facto" department heads in their academy, an extra job for which they had not been prepared:

> "Well, it's been difficult to retrieve the materials we used in previous years that are now located in other academies. That's one of the biggest problems. Second problem is, when you're ready to make a decision about equipment, who makes a decision, you know? And the third problem is that they all run to me thinking that I'm the department head, and I told them no, you're wrong, I'm not a department head!"

The lack of a department head to coordinate and distribute teaching materials placed additional burdens on team leaders and the academy leader who had neither the time nor the experience to effectively meet teachers' needs.

Veteran teachers also ended up serving as department heads in another way — as content-area mentors to younger teachers. Several ongoing, informal relationships developed

within the ninth grade academy between pairs of teachers who teach the same subject, as evidenced in the following interview excerpt:

> Ms. D: "Then I come down the hall and say 'good morning Ms. C,' and she'll say 'good morning Ms. D,' and then she'll say 'what are you doing today?' and I'll say 'what are you doing today?' you know, and then we'll walk down the steps and try to beat each other to the copy machine."
>
> NL: "So, she's your team leader?"
>
> Ms. D: "No. Ms. C actually isn't my team leader. It's Mr. T. She's just my helper, she helps me."
>
> NL: "How did that get set up?"
>
> Ms. D: "It's because we teach the same subject and because I'm young, the new kid on the block, and she helps me... We see each other at the copy machine and sometimes change lessons, she says 'here try this' and I'll say 'here try that'."

Similar cross-team pairings were observed between veteran and novice teachers in science, math, and English. In all cases, these pairings were facilitated by close physical proximity of the teachers' classrooms that enabled them to drop by between classes and before and after school.

Another significant content-focused group was formed in the ninth grade academy by the physical education and health teachers. As SPAR, or special area elective teachers, these teachers were not integrated well into the interdisciplinary team arrangement. Though they were formally assigned to a team, many did not interact closely with their team or attend team meetings because they did not share the same planning period as the MESS teachers and, in some cases, because they did not teach any of the team's students. All of the P.E./Health teachers who made up this group were young, white men who were either new to teaching or had been teaching for only a few years. All coached one or more sports after school. The strong group identity that developed among these teachers was reinforced by daily interaction in the large storeroom that had been converted into a common office space for them since, as P.E. teachers, they did not have their own classrooms. This office quickly became known as "the clubhouse."

This group provided a tremendous amount of support for one another. One teacher said that he probably wouldn't "have made it without all those guys this year." In addition to moral support, however, these teachers also collaborated around the content of their work. They shared materials, lessons for their health classes, and team-taught many of the P.E. classes. This involved ongoing common planning:

Mr. A: "Yes. We plan beforehand. We don't talk about it that morning or anything. We talk about it at the beginning of the unit. Talk about where everybody's going to be, what everybody's role is. What we want to accomplish with the unit, goals and objectives, that sort of stuff."

NL: "And you meet with just the other teacher that your team teaching with?"

Mr. A: "We talk about the unit with the whole phys ed staff, but when it comes down to individual periods, [I] just talk with that individual teacher."

NL: "And who calls the PE staff meetings?"

Mr. A: "We're just in the office."

NL: "You guys are just there and you decide to sit down and talk about it?"

Mr. A: "Right, right. Either during lunch or before practice, or after a game. We're very accessible to one another."

In many ways, this group of teachers functioned as a department without a department head. In terms of camaraderie, support, and substantive interaction, they constituted, by far, one of the most cohesive subgroups within the ninth grade academy.

Flexible Scheduling — An Elusive Goal

Flexible scheduling was notable in the ninth grade academy by virtue of its absence. Ostensibly, teacher teams had the support from the administration to use time flexibly during the school day to meet student needs. All the teachers and administrators interviewed admitted that this had not occurred, however. When asked what was holding them back, teachers cited time and a sense of being too overwhelmed by the first year of reform. Like curriculum integration, teachers tended to view flexible scheduling as something they might be able to implement more in the following year. One teacher who had worked on interdisciplinary teams in middle schools and who had experience with flexible grouping and scheduling simply felt that there was a general "lack of teachers who had been on a team before," who knew how teams could use these practices to their advantage.

There were two instances that could be categorized as uses of flexible time. Near the beginning of the school year, one team leader, who led the "best" team described above, was concerned about a group of "hard core" students who were already displaying severe attendance and discipline problems. She arranged with the guidance counselor and the whole-school principal to pull these students out of their classes for a special "tough talk" session.

The attention these students received and the information they were given during that session helped get some of the them back on track, according to the team leader.

Another instance of flexible scheduling occurred during the second term when ninth grade students who had not yet passed the state functional exam in mathematics took the exam. Many failed to pass. Academy administrators and teachers decided to schedule time during the school day for the students who had failed to receive extra help preparing for a second attempt. A math teacher was released from part of her regular teaching to provide the extra help. This was a unique example of a flexible response by the entire academy to an unanticipated student need.

Like the teachers, the academy principal also saw flexible scheduling as a practice that teams might implement as they became more familiar and comfortable with the teaming concept:

> "Yeah, I don't think the scheduling...they just don't understand that. That's something that's going to be part of growth. What they don't understand is that they have all this power there, and they just won't use it. They're still waiting for the central office, or me, to instruct them as to what to do, and not relying on their own ingenuity and expertise with children."

This comment raises the question of whether the academy administration was successful in communicating to teacher teams, in a consistent and encouraging way, that they actually did have the "power" to change the schedule and regroup students.

Summary and Discussion

The foregoing analyses use a variety of methods to examine how structural reforms in schools can influence the pattern and content of teachers' relationships with each other. In general, Harbor's reform effort has been successful in increasing teachers' general sense of collegiality and levels of collaboration. The following discussion specifies the impact of the reforms on three areas — the *frequency* and types of interactions, *whom* teachers do or do not interact with, and the *content* of teacher interactions.

Frequency and Types of Interactions

Though there has been a general increase in teachers' general sense of collegiality and in weekly interactions among teachers, it appears that reforms influence the frequency of different types of interactions in different ways. Survey data from Harbor indicate that while

the frequency of informal conversations and one-on-one assistance increased throughout the study period, levels of routine sharing and actual joint work (or true collaboration) increased only from spring to fall, during the period when the faculty was working hard to get the "new Harbor" up and running. These types of interaction, that require greater amounts of interdependence and deprivatization of practice, did not continue to rise throughout the first year of implementation. Because these rates, happily, did not decrease over the year, teacher collaboration under the new organization may be attributed less to a "start-up" effect and perhaps more to a "ceiling" effect. It may be that the ordinary time pressures during the school day, getting used to the new policies and procedures, as well as the idiosyncratic proclivities of individual teachers set a limit on the amount of collaboration that teachers engage in during the first year of reform. Observations suggest, however, that informal conversations should not necessarily be looked down on; a surprising amount of information can be shared in brief exchanges between classes and before and after school.

As expected, observation and interview data indicated variation among interdisciplinary teams in terms of teacher-interactions. These data also suggest, however, that the frequency of interactions among teachers may not be a primary factor in achieving innovation and effectiveness through teacher collaboration. The most successful team in the ninth grade academy appeared to be the team that interacted the least frequently, formally or informally. The success of this team was partly due to a strong team leader who took a great deal of work on herself, and to the characteristics of the students. Another important element, however, was that the veteran status of the teachers on this team and the team's success insulated the team from close management by academy administrators. This enabled the team to avoid overly contrived interactions and to simply interact to do the work that needed to be done.

With Whom Teachers Interact

These data reveal that instituting these practices does influence with whom teachers interact and, to some extent, the tone of those interactions. Eliminating departments and creating five separate academies decreases teachers' contact with their subject-area colleagues. This disconnection appears to be exacerbated for teachers in the ninth grade academy who also are organized into interdisciplinary teams. Teachers in the ninth grade compensated for this through the formation of informal subject-area pairings between younger and veteran teachers, or, in the case of the PE/Health teachers, by creating a mini-department within the academy. In general, teachers tended to turn to the nearest veteran teacher for content guidance and for assistance in obtaining materials and supplies.

Part of the purpose of school-within-a-school organization is to create a small, cohesive faculty that works together toward the common goals of the program. In spite of its separation into teams, such cohesion was apparent among the ninth grade academy faculty at Harbor. The danger of school-within-a-school organization, however, is that cohesion among the whole school faculty may be sacrificed for cohesion within the smaller group. Qualitative evidence reveals that was the case at Harbor. Ninth grade teachers experienced a strong sense of isolation from teachers in the upper grade academies. This is not surprising given that teachers now teach in separated wings of the building with separate entrances and administrative offices. This isolation was not only physical, however, but psychological as well, with ninth grade teachers feeling looked down upon and unappreciated by their colleagues.

The psychological dynamic that emerged could be interpreted as an example of negative identity formation, where one group generates a sense of "togetherness" by opposing itself to another group. In this case, it appears that status and identity were formed by upper grade academies through mechanisms of irritation and pity toward the ninth grade teachers, and of berating and scapegoating ninth grade students. Similarly, part of the cohesion among the ninth grade academy faculty may rest on the perceived need to support one another against the attitudes and actions of their upper-grade colleagues. The weakness in negative identity formation, especially among groups of perceived unequal status, is that it can easily become dysfunctional. Expending time and energy shoring each other up and maintaining an image of competence and solidarity can make it too easy for groups to ignore internal tensions that keep them from improving and functioning as well as they can. Whether dysfunction or healthy competition ultimately emerges among academies at Harbor remains to be seen.

What Teachers Interact About

Interview and observation data indicate that teachers were much more likely to interact with one another, both individually and within a team, about student discipline, attendance, and administrative matters related to activities, grading, and credits. Teachers rarely interacted about teaching strategies (except as they related to behavior management) or curriculum content. One barrier to substantive planning around content is a persistent habit of privacy among teachers that will take longer than one year of reform to dispel. Another barrier appears to be finding time during the school day free from interruption and the press of immediate matters involving students. Common planning time for teams is spent on administrative duties, meeting with parents and students, or doing some of the extra work (such as bathroom monitoring) requested by the academy administration.

Another important factor that appeared to determine what teachers interact about were the priorities and reward structure established by school leaders. For the first year of reform, teachers' focus on student discipline and improving attendance rather than on curriculum reflected the priorities not only of the academy administration, but the whole-school administration as well. The school principal, a vice principal, and the academy principal all agreed that getting the school under control and getting students to attend were the primary goals for the first year. Instruction and curriculum had been set aside to be focused on during the second year, a move that resulted from the realization that they couldn't "do it all at once." In the ninth grade academy, teacher teams were rewarded verbally for improving their students' attendance during meetings of the academy faculty and visibly by displayed charts that acknowledged improved attendance rates. There appeared to be little pressure and few incentives for joint planning around content.

Conclusion

In general, the reform practices considered here appear to create conditions for increased levels of collegiality and collaboration among teachers. Barriers and limitations persist that raise warning flags, but do not negate the largely positive trends in the evidence presented. It may be that through getting to know each other and working together over time, teachers will create a working environment based on relations of openness, respect, trust, and agreement on mutually determined goals. The creation and maintenance of such an environment also depends on the goals, priorities, and working habits of school administrators, however. Further research in this vein should include an investigation of ways in which the school reform practices affect social relations not only among teachers, but among teachers and administrators as well.

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